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ABSTRACT

A workshop model specifically designed to help people decide whether to become parents or remain childfree is presented. A variety of tools, procedures, and skills, such as a scale to assess one's level of commitment to remaining childfree, are discussed. Desirable characteristics of the workshop facilitator, and the need for evaluation of the workshop and facilitator, are stressed. Application of the basic model to related settings, such as the classroom, social service agency and private practice, are outlined. Implications of the workshop model for strengthening family life education, and suggestions for further action are discussed. Suggestions for further reading and community resources are listed. (Author/RE)

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THE PARENTHOOD OPTION: A MANUAL FOR PROFESSIONALS HELPING PEOPLE DECIDE WHETHER TO HAVE CHILDREN OR REMAIN CHILDFREE

by

Gail A. Thoen, Ph.D.

University of Minnesota

Prepared Under Contract for the

National Alliance for Optional Parenthood

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A very special word of thanks and affection goes to my husband, Dick Thoen, and to my dear friends Janice Weiner and Mary Sheedy Kurcinka. Each supported me in so many ways from the beginning.

I wish to thank John Wolfe for his helpful comments on the manuscript, and also Maria Sweetser for her expert and cheerful help in preparing the manuscript.

And I want to express my deep appreciation to the many people who have participated in my workshops and encouraged me to continue my work.

Gail A. Thoen, Ph.D.
Minneapolis, Minnesota
July, 1979

About the Author

As an Assistant Professor of Family Life at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Gail Thoen teaches and researches contemporary sex roles. She is a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and maintains a private practice and consulting service, specializing in the childfree lifestyle.

Dr. Thoen has devoted much of her professional career to helping people make fertility decisions. She has conducted numerous workshops, presented papers at professional meetings, and has been involved in varied media publicity concerning different aspects of voluntary and involuntary childlessness.

Her most recent work has involved the development of a scale for use in predicting a person's level of commitment to remaining childfree. This scale has been adapted for use in workshops, private counseling and scientific investigation of the childfree lifestyle.

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SECTION I*

INTRODUCTION

*An earlier version of these opening remarks appeared in Thoen, Gail A. and Martha G. Russell, "The Childfree Option: A Workshop Model for Making One of Life's Major Decisions." In N. Stinnett, B. Chesser and J. DeFrain (Eds.), Building Family Strengths: Blueprints for Action. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Most people would agree that

--Not everyone is parenthood material.

--People cannot choose to become parents if they do not perceive an alternative, such as the childfree lifestyle.

--Children born to parents by choice, not accident, have a better chance of growing up in a healthy family environment than children born to parents who did not want them or were not prepared to become parents.

--Variations of the traditional nuclear family form, such as the childfree lifestyle, many ultimately strengthen our understanding of family life.

While most people would agree to the foregoing statements on an intellectual level, they might not on an emotional "gut" level. After all, we are products of a blatantly pronatalist society, where "... the notion of reproductive choice is an illusion" (Blake, 1972, p. 105). Pronatalism, namely, any attitude or policy that exalts the role of parenthood, is dangerous because it denies, or at least limits, free choice. Generally there cannot be free choice in a prejudiced cultural context which make alternatives appear less than desirable (Peck and Senderowitz, 1974).

Folklore about the joy of parenthood is widely believed by many -- although it is not substantiated by facts (LeMasters, 1957). Thus, for many people, that voluntarily childfree couples may constitute a complete and healthy family form, and that they do not have to become parents to be considered adult, mature or responsible in this society, is a radical idea.

An increasing number of social scientists have noted the lack of empirical research on childfree phenomena (Veevers, 1973; Bram, 1974; Thoen, 1977). Also underrepresented in the literature are practical procedures which counselors and family life educators can use in helping

clients and students make one of the most fateful decisions of their lives: whether to become parents or remain childfree. The procedures detailed in this manual are aimed at filling this gap.

A workshop model specifically designed to help people decide whether to become parents or remain childfree will be described. The model is derived from my research on and clinical experience with the childfree. A variety of tools, procedures, and skills, such as a commitment scale to assess one's level of commitment to remaining childfree, are discussed. Desirable characteristics of the workshop facilitator, and the need for evaluation of the workshop and facilitator, are stressed. Application of the basic model to related settings, such as the classroom, social service agency and private practice, are outlined. Implications of the workshop model for strengthening family life education, and suggestions for further action, are discussed. Suggestions for further reading and community resources are listed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP MODEL

The primary objective of the workshop model is to inform participants about the advantages and disadvantages of the childfree lifestyle, so that they have a practical and theoretical basis for deciding whether they wish to become parents or remain childfree. A secondary objective is to help participants gain an awareness of the pressures, rationales, and values that are related to the childfree lifestyle.

The manual was not written to impress upon anyone the difficulties or satisfactions of becoming a parent or remaining childfree. Quite the contrary, the manual seeks to assist family life professionals in helping people make choices that make sense in terms of their own lifestyle, their own value system, and their own relationships. The manual also seeks to

assist family life professionals in helping people to consider alternatives within the context of an understanding of the emotional, social, psychological, physical and economic realities inherent to parenting. And, lastly, the manual seeks to assist you, the family life professional, in self-exploration of these issues.*

A HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKSHOP MODEL

The procedures presented in this manual have their roots in an on-going research project at the University of Minnesota known as "The Theoretical and Practical Significance of Childlessness in American Society."** During 1973 - 1976 I was a member of the original research team which developed and facilitated a series of workshops designed for couples who wished to explore the childfree alternative in an informal group atmosphere.***

As a consequence of my continuing involvement in the theoretical and applied aspects of the childfree alternative, I have developed a number of new procedures and materials, many of which are included in the workshop model. In addition, I have been involved as a client and therapist in exploring the childfree alternative since the original workshops were developed. In brief, the workshop model described below developed out of a solid theoretical base that is tempered considerably by practical and new

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*These comments have been extracted from the work of John C. Freund, Ed. D., Director of Consultation and Education at the Aroostook Mental Health Center in Fort Fairfield, Maine. "Considering Parenthood." Unpublished manuscript, June, 1979. Reprinted with permission of the author.

**I wish to acknowledge the contributions of Martha Russell, Family Life Consultant, Minneapolis; Thomas Walz, Director, Gerontology Program, University of Iowa; and Richard Hey, Professor, Family Social Science, University of Minnesota.

***The interested reader is referred to Russell, Thoen, et al. (1977) for details.

developments in the field.

ADAPTATION OF THE WORKSHOP MODEL TO RELATED SETTINGS

It was noted earlier that the general workshop model lends itself nicely to many social settings. I have used all the procedures described in this manual or know of professionals who have used them in modified form in one or more of the following settings: family life classes at the high school and college level, social service agencies as part of their family life education program, and private practice as part of individual, marital and family counseling.

To help you understand how this manual can be of use to you, brief descriptions of these settings and the appropriateness of certain procedures are introduced below. As you read through the manual, you will find specific exercises and suggestions for personalizing the workshop format to fit your specific needs.

Family Life Classes. The purpose here is general education. It is wise for the educator to keep in mind that most people will have children. U.S. Census data for 1970 indicate that about 8% of the female population is childfree by age 45. It has been estimated that about half of all childlessness is voluntary (Veevers, 1973; Bram, 1974). Much of the growing awareness of childlessness currently heralded in newspaper articles on "new family forms" may very well be "delayed" childlessness. That is, there is evidence to indicate that many women who have delayed childbearing are now choosing to have their first child in their late twenties and early thirties (Sklar & Berkov, 1975).

Therefore, the family life educator must think of ways to present the childfree option in a way that helps students understand the phenomenon from a societal as well as a personal standpoint. Some possible "units" which

could be included are education about parenthood, alternative family forms, population education, and the value of children. Depending on the amount of classroom time available for the topic of optional parenthood, the educator might show a film designed to help people explore the childfree option (exercise #2 of this manual). Or the educator might write a role play to have students demonstrate some of the pressures, values, rationales related to the childfree option (exercise #3).

A second way in which the childfree option may be introduced is to offer the entire workshop format for college or university credit. For example, I have offered the workshop as a one-credit University of Minnesota "Special Topics" course, jointly sponsored by the General College (day school) and Continuing Education Through Extension (night school). By co-ordinating sponsorship for the workshop through regular and evening classes, course enrollment is thus opened to a wide variety of students.

For example, in one such course, the students included three teachers who taught family life education at the high school level. They stated that their reason for being in the course was to include a unit on the child-free option in their high school curriculum. Since these particular students all had children of their own, and were most willing to share their feelings and experiences as parents, they contributed immeasurably to group discussion on advantages and disadvantages of parenthood.

In brief, the educator is in a unique position to strengthen a person's right <u>to choose</u> a lifestyle, be it with or without children. The underlying assumption of this point of view is that wanted and planned children, born to informed people who accept the responsibilities of parenting, have a better chance of growing up in healthy family surroundings than unwanted children born to parents who are not ready or able to accept parental re-

sponsibilities.

Social Service Agencies. The purpose here is general education for anyone in the community. The participants may or may not be clients of the agency. The general model described in this manual is the basic blueprint for childfree workshops sponsored by social service agencies, but it can and has been modified in a number of ways to fit individual agency needs and goals. For example, in Section VI you will learn how the length of the workshop may be condensed or expanded. Also, the workshop model can be adapted for use in working with involuntarily childfree people. For example, in a workshop sponsored by an adoption agency, I presented the childfree option as a possibility for couples who might reconsider adoption if they realized other options are available.

In brief, any number of variations, including the use of co-leaders, could be experimented with to meet specific agency needs.

Individual, Marital and Family Counseling. The goal here is to provide a more intensive and personalized therapeutic experience than is possible in a workshop setting. It has been my experience that persons who have given considerable time and thought to this option, and are experiencing conflict, may benefit from private counseling. Common questions asked by couples and single people who are considering the childfree option are, "Am I normal?", "Will I be sorry when I'm older?" Occasionally a couple that has made a permanent decision to remain childfree, with or without sterilization, may want to reconsider having children or adoption.

Depending on the particular case, any of the procedures outlined in the general model may be modified by the private practitioner for the clinical setting. For example, the commitment scale, assertiveness training, and role playing, which will be introduced to you in the next section of the

manual, can be utilized with both single and married people within the limits of a 60-minute counseling session. In addition, if the practitioner's clientele of childfree people is sufficient to warrant a group experience (or if he/she can open the group membership to clients of a colleague), the basic workshop model can be adapted for personalized, therapeutic proceedings.

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKSHOP FACILITATOR

Although it is not necessary that the facilitator be a professional therapist, it is necessary that the facilitator possess the personal characteristics, leadership ability and factual knowledge that are associated with facilitating small groups. Certainly there are "indigenous" leaders in every agency or community education setting that might excel in this role. Objectivity, sensitivity, a desire to help people, and an acceptance of the childfree lifestyle as a viable option are basic characteristics I recommend.

Regardless of the facilitator's credentials and willingness to lead a childfree workshop, some preliminary self-examination is necessary. The facilitator must be willing to openly explore his/her feelings and personal value system insofar as the childfree option being a viable and healthy alternative to parenting. It is equally important that the facilitator not be a "crusader" for the childfree lifestyle, but to earnestly support and encourage an objective examination of the benefits of parenthood.

One way for the potential facilitator to "train" for this role is to practice defending provocative statements about the childfree option. A trusted colleague, who is willing to listen and give critical feedback about the facilitator's objectivity and sensitivity to the issues, is a great aid in this growth process. Some suggested statements are:

1. Not all people are parenthood material.

2. Childfree people are not normal.

3. Raising children is the greatest joy a person can have in his/her life.

4. Childfree people are selfish and immature.

5. You can't be a "real" family without children.

6. Children hold a successful marriage together.

SECTION II

HOW TO USE THE MANUAL

This manual contains exercises, strategies and resources to help you build a workshop format or educational curriculum on the parenthood option which is uniquely your own. Although the manual is carefully structured for those who like having detailed instructions at their fingertips, it is also designed to encourage development of exercises, strategies and resources that fit your needs and objectives.

Each of the exercises in this manual fits into an overall workshop format representing a balanced sequence of cognitive and affective learning experiences and methodologies. However, you need not utilize the exercises in the order they are presented. It is not intended as a rigid sequence. Flexibility and responsiveness to your own needs are the keys to the manual's success. Lots of alternative exercises and resources are suggested throughout to impress upon you that you, the family life professional, are the best judge of which option to use and when. Adapt the exercises! Change them! Experiment with them!

The manual is divided into eight sections:

Section I	Introduction
Section II	How To Use The Manual
Section III	General Procedures For Arranging a Workshop
Section IV	Exercises, Strategies and Resources
Section V	Data Fact Sheets
Section VI	Suggestions For Personalizing The Workshop Format
Section VII	Concluding Remarks: How You Can Strengthen Family Life By Supporting The Parenthood Option
Section VIII	References

Section IV contains eight exercises which are organized as follows:

A. Topic: A component of the fertility decision-making process which has been identified in research or clinical settings.

B. Time: A recommendation for the minimum amount of time needed to process the experience.

C. Purpose: A statement encompassing the goals and objectives of the experience.

D. Materials: A list of materials to have on hand. Some exercises refer to Data Fact Sheets found in Section V.

E. Opening Comments: Sample remarks based on academic and popular literature on the parenthood option which may be used to introduce an exercise. In full recognition that any remarks made by the facilitator must be personal and reflect his/her own values, interests and objectives, these remarks are intended as an example upon which to build your own script.

F. Procedure: Step-by-step details on how to facilitate the experience. If you like detailed instructions, it should all be here. If you prefer to develop your own procedures, use them as guidelines on which to build.

G. Process Notes: Tips and suggestions for processing the materials. Sometimes examples or anecdotes are offered.

H. Alternative Exercises: Two or more alternative exercises covering similar cognitive and affective materials. You are encouraged to experiment with as many as possible in developing your own style and format.

I. To the Teacher, To the Counselor, and To the Staff Trainer: Remarks addressed to specific professional groups and are meant to elaborate upon an issue in the text.

J. Suggested Readings: An annotated bibliography of materials for further

reading by facilitator and/or participants. Sources are not meant to be comprehensive but illustrative of classics or newer materials on optional parenthood.

K. Additional Resources: A list of additional resources (other than reading materials) where the facilitator and/or participants may seek further information.

A WORD ON DOCUMENTATION

Most of the exercises in this book have not appeared previously in print. I have used these exercises for many years in my roles as teacher, counselor and researcher.

Whenever an exercise has been suggested by an outside source, I have done my best to give appropriate credit. Because variations of some exercises have been in the public domain for years, and continue to be passed on from professional to professional, it is often difficult to identify the original source.

A. A star (*) indicates that elaboration of the text or a formal citation appears on the bottom of the page.

B. References

1. An annotated bibliography of classic and newer materials is given at the end of each exercise.

2. A formal bibliography for all work cited in the manual will be found in Section VIII.

C. A list of contributors whose work is cited in the manual will be found in Section VIII.

A WORD ON TERMINOLOGY

A. Facilitator: The person who is presenting the workshop, counseling or classroom experience.

B. Participant: The person who is experiencing the workshop, counseling or classroom experience.

C. Parenthood Option: A phrase used repeatedly throughout the manual to emphasize that people have a choice about whether to become a parent or remain childfree.

D. Childfree, Childfree Lifestyle, Childless, Childlessness: Terms that are used interchangeably throughout the manual. The first two denote terms participants in my early workshops prefer to use about themselves. The second two are more traditional and commonly found in academic literature.

SECTION III

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR ARRANGING A WORKSHOP

This section is purposely entitled "General Procedures" to suggest to the reader that he/she look not so much for a neat, clear-cut formula but rather an overall broad orientation which is flexible enough to be adapted to various settings. With slight modification, all procedures can be adapted for use in an institutional or clinical setting.

Preparation: Pre-Workshop Duties and Timetable

I. Publicity

A. Announcements. Three weeks prior to the workshop date send a news release or announcement flyer to professionals and agencies in your area who might refer clients, students, colleagues, and friends. It is important to stress that the workshop is designed either for people who are considering the childfree lifestyle, or for the training of professionals who work with childfree couples, not both. As illustrated in Figure 1, the announcement for people who are considering the childfree lifestyle should also make clear that individuals as well as couples are welcome.

B. Direct Advertising. Free advertising for social service efforts is usually available in the family life section of local newspapers. Be sure to check with local papers regarding the procedure and deadline for submitting a press release for the workshop. If free advertising is not available, then purchase advertisement space in the Sunday edition of the paper. In addition to local newspapers, you may also want to send a news release to specialized newspapers and "in-house" newsletters (e.g., the YWCA, Planned Parenthood, the major university and/or college in your area, women's groups, etc.).

Another type of direct advertising is through television and radio. Find out which stations make available free air time for

Figure 1. Publicity Announcement

CHILDFREE LIFESTYLE WORKSHOP

A ONE-CREDIT COURSE OFFERED BY
THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FOR WOMEN AND MEN, SINGLE OR COUPLES

SEPT. 16, 7-9:30 PM, AND SEPT. 17, 9-4:00 PM

Dr. Gail Thoen, Assistant Professor of Family Studies in General College at the University of Minnesota, will be conducting a workshop designed to help individuals explore issues surrounding the decision of whether to have children or remain childfree. Dr. Thoen will report on her research and share with participants a scale she has developed for measuring commitment to remaining childfree.

Participants will have an opportunity to examine their personal level of commitment to remaining childfree and to critically review selected literature in the field. Topics for discussion include the impact of children on the parents' relationship, implications of the childfree lifestyle over the life cycle, and the childfree lifestyle in terms of pressures, values, motivations, and the decision making process.

Cost is $16.50 per person for one University credit plus a small fee for course materials. Grading is on S-N basis only. Class size is limited to 25 people. Registration for GC 1-738 begins on August 15th. You may register in person at 101 Wesbrook Hall on the main campus of the University of Minnesota, or by mail (call 373-3930 to request a registration form).

Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope in your registration materials so that course materials may be forwarded to you before the workshop begins. Students are expected to read three short articles before the first meeting.

If you wish further information, call Gail Thoen at 373-5264.

non-profit organizations. Local "talk" shows are always looking for provocative topics to discuss.

All publicity should include a telephone number where the public may call for further information. My experience is that from half to three quarters of the participants who attend the workshop do call first. Therefore, it is extremely important that the person who answers the phone be reassuring and sensitive to inquiries. A general statement explaining that this is not a therapy group, but an informal support and discussion group led by a professional family life educator, can be very reassuring to a potential participant. Sometimes callers will tell you their personal reasons for considering the workshop and want to know if they will "fit in". The caller should be reassured that all childfree people, regardless of motivation, are welcome.

The person answering the telephone should generate a waiting list once the workshop has filled. This list also includes people who cannot attend the workshop on the day that it is offered but would like to be informed when another is offered.

II. Pre-Workshop Registration Materials

Upon receipt of a check covering all registration fees in full, the workshop sponsor should return the following materials to the participant:

A. Cover letter, including map where workshop will be held.

B. Three articles illustrating the type of literature available. The articles chosen should reflect the personal interests of the workshop facilitator(s). I have used articles which indicate the scope of material currently available, such as a position paper, a re-

search study, and a "popular" magazine article.

An alternative is to assign an entire book. If you do so, make arrangements with your local bookstore to ensure sufficient copies are available. A list of suggested readings appears at the end of this section.

C. Confidential background sheet. Participants are asked for information which sensitizes the facilitator(s) to specialized needs and interests of the group members (see Figure 2). For example, one question which I have found useful to ask is, "Which topics would you especially like discussed at the workshops?"

III. Arranging for the Conference Room

Secure a suitable room. Ideally, it should project an informal atmosphere. Movable chairs and a round table that can accommodate up to 30 people is ideal. You will also need a blackboard, 16mm projector and screen, and a display table to hold books, flyers and newspaper articles.

IV. Materials for Workshop Participants as Assigned Readings

A. Position papers

1. Greene, Gael. "A Vote Against Motherhood." Saturday Evening Post, Jan. 26, 1963, 10-12.

One of the earliest personal statements to appear in a popular trade magazine endorsing the childfree lifestyle. Non-technical; easy to read.

2. Rossi, Alice. "Transition to Parenthood." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1963, 30, 26-39.

One of the earliest papers to appear in academic literature urging recognition of the difficulties associated with the

Figure 2. Background Information Sheet

This information will be kept in the strictest confidence.

*Female:

Name _____ Age _____
First Middle Initial Surname

Occupation _____

Education _____ Marital Status: S___ M___ D___ W___ Sep'd___

*Male:

Name _____ Age _____
First Middle Initial Surname

Occupation _____

Education _____ Marital Status: S___ M___ D___ W___ Sep'd___

Address: Home _____ Work _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____

Marital Information: Date of marriage _____ Date of divorce _____

Is your partner with you today? ___ If so, what is his/her surname? _____

Do you plan to have any children? (check as many as apply)

Yes ____ No ____ Don't Know ____

I already have ____ children. I am a step-parent ____

What is your reason for being here today? _____

_____

_____

How did you learn about this workshop? (Please be specific, e.g., name and date of newspaper.) _____

Is there any topic you would especially liked discussed?

*If appropriate, please fill in for your partner as well as yourself.

transition to parenthood in our culture. Does not endorse the childfree lifestyle per se, but encourages careful consideration of responsibilities associated with parenthood. Non-technical; lengthy.

3. National Alliance for Optional Parenthood materials. Among its many services, this organization publishes a number of reprints of newspaper and magazine articles pertaining to the childfree lifestyle. (See enclosed order form.)

B. Research studies

1. Veevers, Jean. "Voluntarily Childless Wives: An Exploratory Study." Sociology and Social Research, 1973, 57, 356-366. Pioneering study in the area of voluntary childlessness. Excellent not only for discussion of research findings, but for an illustration of typical methodological procedures for studying the childfree.

2. Peck, Ellen and Senderowitz, Judith (Eds.). Pronatalism: The Myth of Mom and Apple Pie. New York: Thomas Cromwell, 1974. Book of readings including pioneering studies by Popenoe, Veevers and Pohlman. Good overview of the field through 1973.

3. Veevers, Jean. "Voluntary Childlessness: A Review of Issues and Evidence." Forthcoming in Marriage and Family Review, 1979.

Comprehensive overview of research to date by one of the pioneers in the field. Lengthy; useful for a bibliography.

C. Books

1. Fabe, Marilyn and Wikler, Norma. Up Against the Clock. New York: Random House, 1979.

Highly informative examination of psychological, sociological and biological aspects of motherhood viewed from the perspective of the older (30+) career woman. Contains many personal accounts of women who were interviewed for the study. Much of the book is presented in a question and answer format.

2. Whelan, Elizabeth. A Baby?...Maybe. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1975.

   Classic book describing one women's personal account of the decision making process. Used in many childfree workshops as a basic reading assignment (Family Tree, 1978; Thoen, 1978; Simon-Gruen, 1979). Addresses itself to issues concerning both men and women.

V. Supplementary Reading for the Workshop Facilitator(s)

A. Russell, Martha, Thoen, Gail, Hey, Richard and Walz, Thomas. "The Choice of Childlessness: A Workshop Model." Family Coordinator, 1977, 27, 179-183.

   Details the development of the workshop model as part of an on-going research project at the University of Minnesota.

B. Thoen, Gail A. Commitment Among Voluntarily Childfree Couples to a Variant Lifestyle. Unpublished University of Minnesota doctoral dissertation, 1977.

   Technical discussion of theoretical and methodological considerations in the development of the Thoen Commitment Scale, which was later adapted by the author for use in the workshop setting.

SECTION IV

EXERCISES, STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

EXERCISE #1
Page 1

Time: 30 minutes

Topic: Getting Acquainted

Purpose: An opportunity for the facilitator and the participants to get acquainted in a non-threatening manner.

Materials: Each participant receives one of the following:

Get Acquainted Task Instruction Sheet (Data Sheet #1)*

Participants are asked to complete the task while waiting for the workshop to formally begin.

Workshop Materials Kit

Agenda (Data Sheet #2)

Assertiveness training model (Data Sheet #3)

Thoen Commitment Scale (see order form in Section VIII)

Evaluation form (Data Sheet #4)

Writing paper

Opening Comments: Workshops by their very nature provide the opportunity for personal interaction among the participants. We will work together to develop knowledge and self-understanding about optional parenthood and to learn new skill-building techniques to use in the decision making process. Learning about research, sharing common problems, exchanging ideas, using new tools, and experiencing some small-group activities are all part of this workshop. A good way to get started is to get to know one another and to explain why we are here.

Procedure:

A. Utilize welcoming remarks to establish credibility of the facilitator and to build rapport with participants. You might include statements

*Data Sheets appear in Section V.

regarding your formal academic credentials, personal interest in the topic, and how you developed this workshop. (Time: 10 minutes)

B. Facilitate getting acquainted exercise outlined in the Get Acquainted Task Information Sheet (Data Sheet #1), distributed at the beginning of the workshop. Ask participants to sit in a circle. Have participants introduce the person he or she interviewed to the group according to the directions on the Get Acquainted Task Sheet (Data Sheet #1). (Time: 20 minutes)

Process Notes: Ask for a volunteer to begin the introductions. If the facilitator has an opportunity to engage in the exercise with a workshop participant, he/she can model for the group by going first. Introductions should be limited to two or three sentences.

Alternative Exercises:*

A. Following opening remarks by the facilitator, ask the participants to sit in a circle and introduce themselves by (1) giving his or her name and (2) completing the following sentence:

(suggested sentences)

"The reason I am nervous about being here today is..."

"How I happen to be at this workshop is..."

"My interest in the topic of optional parenthood is..."

(Time: 15 minutes)

B. Following opening remarks by the facilitator, divide the group into pairs

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*Modified from Hamermesh, Frances W. Preparing Professionals for Family Life and Human Sexuality Education. Michigan: Department of Public Health, 1978. Reprinted with the permission of the author.

at random. Have the participants pair with someone they don't know. Ask the partners to introduce themselves and spend a few minutes telling each other: "I am here today because..." After five minutes announce that each pair should now team up with a second pair and each person should tell, "It's difficult to remain childfree in our society because..." After five minutes, have each group of four join another group and this time let each of the original partners introduce each other to the group by describing the other's concerns or background very briefly. (Time: 25 minutes)

To the Teacher: Use a get acquainted exercise in the classroom as an opportunity to develop group experience in an exercise about the value of children that is not personally threatening or revealing for the students. For example, divide your class into small groups of 5 - 7 and assign to each a distinct age group. The breakdown might be roughly:

12 - 15 years old	21 - 30 years old	41 - 50 years old
16 - 20 years old	31 - 40 years old	50 and older

Have each group spend 8 - 10 minutes coming up with completions for the sentence, "The value of children for people age ___ to ___ (insert age assigned to each group) is..." Process by discussing novel and common elements generated by each group.

To the Counselor: Use a get acquainted task to learn about your client's feelings regarding the value of children in an exercise that is not personally threatening. Ask your client to spend a few minutes coming up with sentence completions for the following:

"The value of children to an 18 year old is..."

"The value of children to a 25 year old is..."

"The value of children to a 40 year old is..."

"The value of children to someone 60 or over is..."

Discuss your client's responses. Encourage the client to consider the sources of his/her unique attitudes and life experiences regarding the value of children.

To the Staff Trainer: Family life professionals vary in their feelings about the value of children. Although many maintain an outwardly clinical and objective tone, personal attitudes and life experiences may influence how a professional interacts with a client or a student. Use the same sentence completion exercise outlined above in To the Teacher as a vehicle to help professionals understand when their values might interfere with effective teaching or counseling.

Suggested Readings:

A. Dumont, Jacqueline. A Guide to Values Clarification in Sex Education. Cleveland: Preterm, 1979.

Contains 31 exercises designed to build trust and risk levels.

B. Hamermesh, Frances. Preparing Professionals for Family Life and Human Sexuality Education. Michigan: Department of Public Health, 1978.

See especially Chapter I, "Why Are We Here?", for large selection of get acquainted exercises.

EXERCISE #2
Page 1

Time: 75 minutes

Topic: Values Clarification

Purpose: To learn about the content and power of your own values in relation to the larger society and how they help--or hinder--you in making a decision regarding whether you want to have a child or remain childfree.

Materials: Film: "You Can't Mean Not Ever?"

Distributor: University of Minnesota
Audiovisual Library Service
3300 University Ave. S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Also available from: National Alliance for
Optional Parenthood
2010 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

16mm sound projector

Screen

Blackboard and chalk

Opening Comments: Values clarification is a process which helps people arrive at an answer. It is a tool to help you decide between alternatives. It is a strategy designed to help you make a decision, to act, and to determine what has meaning for you (Simon, 1974). Before something can be fully valued it must be:

1. Chosen freely
2. Chosen from among alternatives
3. Chosen after due reflection
4. Prized and cherished
5. Publicly affirmed
6. Acted upon
7. Part of a pattern of repeated action

(Simon, 1974, p. XV)

EXERCISE #2
Page 2

We are fortunate to have a film available to help us sort out our values regarding optional parenthood. It deals specifically with the child-free lifestyle and the decision-making process. It is entitled "You Can't Mean Not Ever?". Based on research conducted at the University of Minnesota, this film portrays three social situations in which a fictional childfree couple experiences the pressures to have children. Following these situations the couple demonstrates their growing self-confidence and mutual support as they deal with stereotypes they feel others have of them for remaining child-free.

Let's have a look at the film now and then we'll use it as a vehicle to stimulate discussion on values involved in deciding whether to have children or remain childfree.

Procedure:

A. Show film (26 minutes).

B. Assign participants to small discussion groups of 6 to 8 people, with partner, if present.

C. Participants have 25 minutes to discuss "advantages" and 25 minutes to discuss "disadvantages" of remaining childfree. Suggest they use the film just viewed to consider such topics as motivations, values, pressures and stereotypes.

D. Task is for participants to draw up two separate lists suggesting "advantages" and "disadvantages" of remaining childfree, noting whether these are the same or different for females and for males.

E. One person in each group is to be the recorder, to write down the lists and to give feedback to the larger group when participants reassemble.

EXERCISE #2
Page 3

Process Notes: Facilitator's task is to float from group to group to observe and "coach" as necessary. After allotted time reassemble large group and have them sit in a circle surrounding the blackboard. Ask each small group recorder to read the list generated by his/her group. The facilitator lists answers on the board and processes the information by doing such things as tallying the number of times the same ideas are mentioned, reflecting on the similarities and differences of the lists generated by the workshop participants when juxtaposed with current research findings. Encourage discussion. Solicit feedback about the film. THE FACILITATOR MUST PREPARE FOR THIS EXERCISE BY REVIEWING CURRENT LITERATURE REGARDING VALUES AND COSTS OF CHILDREN. (See Suggested Readings - below.)

Alternative Exercises:

I. Other Media Resources. Utilize any available film or slide sets dealing with the responsibilities of parenthood (suggestions below). Traditional materials probably will not mention childlessness as an option, so the facilitator must use his/her skills to process the film or slide set so that it can be used to examine the value and cost of children when juxtaposed with the childfree lifestyle. Suggested discussion questions:

"How do you think social and economic conditions might affect people's attitudes towards having children?"

"What strikes you most about the film/slide show we just saw with regard to the cost and value of having children?"

Suggested Audio-Visual Resources for Values Clarification Exercise:

A. "Parenthood: Myths and Realities"

Time: Variable (filmstrips)

Distributor: Guidance Associates, Inc.
Communication Park
Box 300
White Plains, NY 10602

In a round table discussion, six individuals explore the reasons--some positive, some negative--that people have for becoming parents. Participants discuss ways in which couples are pressured into having children and strongly advise prospective parents to examine their motives before they begin a family.

B. "Adapting to Parenthood"

Time: 20 minutes

Distributor: Polymorph Films
331 Newbury St.
Boston, MA 02115

Most of the film follows a young, Caucasian, middle class couple as they adjust to the arrival of their first baby. Family life is disrupted and an effort is made to find new ways of communicating feelings.

II. Pencil and Paper Techniques.

A. Construct your own cost and value of children questionnaire. Sample item might read:

"A girl becomes a real woman only after she has a child."

Circle your response.

strongly agree	moderately agree	neutral	moderately disagree	strongly disagree

Facilitator would ask the participants to complete the questionnaire as a workshop exercise and then form small groups and discuss their responses to the items. Reassemble the entire group and ask

each group to report its findings. The facilitator reflects on comments of the group by contrasting and comparing their responses to information gleaned from popular and academic literature on the costs and values of children. THE FACILITATOR MUST PREPARE FOR THIS EXERCISE BY REVIEWING CURRENT LITERATURE ON THE COSTS AND VALUES OF CHILDREN. (See Suggested Readings - below.) (Time: 75 minutes)

B. Utilize a standardized cost and value of children questionnaire, such as found in

The Cost and Value of American Children Author: Leon E. Clark

Distributor: Population Reference Bureau, Inc.
1337 Connecticut Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Designed for students (Junior High School through College) to clarify their values regarding parenthood. Easily adaptable for workshop setting. Easy to administer and interpret. Comes with complete set of materials and data for processing as part of teaching module.

To the Teacher: If you have limited class time, but a commitment to introducing the topic of voluntary childlessness -- this film, "You Can't Mean Not Ever?" is a highly recommended resource. In a 60-minute period, you could show the film and facilitate a discussion on the childfree lifestyle with a minimum deviation from any standard family life curriculum.

To the Counselor: The use of resources, such as films or questionnaires, greatly enhances standard counseling techniques. You can create an atmosphere of trust and innovation by use of resources which stimulate thinking and

action. Implementing creative counseling techniques provides an opportunity for clients to build a base of experience and knowledge from which they can selectively choose, rearrange, or even reconstruct their thoughts.

To the Staff Trainer: Encourage your staff to become experienced with a wide range of tools and techniques for values clarification exercises designed to help people decide whether they want to have a child or remain childfree. The films and questionnaires cited in this unit could be used to help staff members identify areas in their repertoire which could be strengthened.

Suggested Readings:

I. Values and Costs of Children. Two comprehensive annotated bibliographies are available which encompass many citations relevant to this topic. Both bibliographies include references to popular as well as academic literature.

A. Baker, Carole (Ed.). "Children as a factor in Marital Satisfaction: A Selected Bibliography," 1979. Cost: $1.50

Distributor: National Alliance for Optional Parenthood
2010 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

B. National Alliance for Optional Parenthood. "Voluntary Childlessness Bibliography," 1978 (revision in progress). Cost: $0.50

List of books, studies, and articles on voluntary childlessness.

II. Values Clarification Theory and Exercises.

A. Simon, Sidney B. Meeting Yourself Halfway. Illinois: Argus Communications, 1974.

Classical book in the field. Contains 31 exercises with easy to follow directions.

EXERCISE #3
Page 1

Time: 1 hour

Topic: Assertiveness Training for Childfree People

Purpose: To introduce basic elements of assertiveness training as they apply to childfree people, and to give workshop participants experience in using assertiveness skills in situations commonly reported as problematic by people considering the childfree lifestyle.

Materials: Assertiveness Training Model Handout (see Data Sheet #3)

Opening Comments: Have you ever been in a situation where the subject of childlessness comes up and you react in a manner which you're very sorry about later? Maybe you were apologetic or defensive or evasive. It ended up with you feeling hurt, misunderstood, anxious or angry as a result of your non-assertive behavior. There is a more effective way to handle these situations.

A major goal of Assertiveness Training is to build a personal belief system that will help you support and justify the notion that you have a right to your own feelings and opinions regardless of what others may think. Some other person, or in the case of voluntary childlessness, the majority of society, may not like your feelings and choices. That doesn't detract from their legitimacy.

In order to understand how Assertiveness Training can help childfree people act in an assertive manner, we must first gain some insight about what Assertiveness Training is, after which we can practice assertive skills here today.

Procedure:*

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*Reprinted with permission of Janice Weiner, M.S.W., who presented this model to a workshop of voluntarily childfree people sponsored by the author.

A. Introduce basic elements of Assertiveness Training.

1. The facilitator gives examples of aggressive, assertive, non-assertive, and passive-agressive behavior. Paraphrase the definitions on the handout (Data Sheet #3) and then discuss the differences.
2. Encourage discussion and invite questions.

B. Apply Assertiveness Training to situations participants identify as problematic.

1. Ask participants to quickly write down three (3) anxiety provoking situations in which they remember feeling uptight, angry, defensive, hurt, or misunderstood regarding their decision about whether to have children or remain childfree.
2. Prioritize the situations by numbering one, the most anxiety provoking; two, the next; three, the easiest to handle.
3. Identify the strongest feeling in each situation.
4. Identify who the other person is in each situation.
5. Identify the other's behavior. Is it indirect, aggressive, non-assertive, or assertive?
6. Identify what role you played.

C. Role play "real-life" situations.

1. Facilitator asks for a couple to volunteer to do a demonstration role play (enactment) of a real-life situation which they have described in the preceding exercise.
2. Couple sits in the center of the room and role plays the situation they have chosen.
3. The facilitator uses his/her skills, coupled with suggestions from

the group to "coach" the role players in practicing assertive behavior as they role play their specific problem situation.

4. An illustration will help clarify the process:

A couple has volunteered to role play a situation in which they tell their parents at a family gathering that they wish to remain permanently childfree. The parents were looking forward to grandchildren and are shocked.

The facilitator instructs the group that anyone can play the "parent." That is, the role playing couple will react to anyone in the group who makes a "parent" statement. The facilitator's task includes processing the role play so that assertive statements are practiced. For example, the role players make a statement to the group that they have definitely decided not to have children. Anyone in the group is free to respond with a "parent message" such as, "It isn't normal not to have children," or "Oh, you'll change your mind when you get older." If the role players get stuck in coming up with assertive answers to such pressure, members of the group are encouraged to "coach" them by shouting out assertive answers such as "I know you don't agree with our decision, mom and dad, but we hope you will respect our choice." This interaction is usually great fun and serves well the goal of demonstrating assertiveness.

D. Individual practice of assertiveness skills

1. Facilitator randomly breaks up the group into four or five smaller groups. People with partners stay together, but the newly formed

small group should consist of people different from those who were together in previous experiences. (This gives people a chance to meet a large range of participants during the workshop -- something past participants indicate is a major benefit of attending the workshop.)

2. Task of the smaller groups is to engage in two short role plays suggested by the members of the group. Situations portrayed in the small group role plays should be different from the one illustrated in the demonstration role play.
3. The facilitator's task is to float from group to group to observe and "coach" as necessary.
4. A few minutes should be left before going onto the next workshop activity for the small groups to share with one another some things that went on in their respective groups.

Process Notes: Ideally, the group should role play a situation suggested by a member of the group. However, if the group is reluctant to get started, you might suggest a situation and encourage someone to act it out. Possible situations include:

1. Husband and wife trying to reach a decision about whether to have children or remain childfree when they feel very differently about the decision.
2. A single woman trying to explain to her fiance that she doesn't intend to have children.

Alternative Exercises:

A. Decision-Making Models. Skills in most decision-making models include

those in communication and personal interaction as well as cognitive skills such as comprehension, analysis and evaluation. As with the Assertiveness Training Model described earlier, the facilitator first must introduce basic theory and then provide an opportunity for participants to practice their new skills. For example, you may want to introduce the rudiments of decision-making theory as outlined by Hamermesh (1978) in Preparing Professionals for Family Life and Human Sexuality Education, and then present and discuss a case history of a fictional couple who is having difficulty deciding whether to have a child or remain childfree. A sample case history I have developed for this purpose is presented in Data Sheet #5. The facilitator's task is to encourage participants to define basic issues and generate realistic alternatives for the fictional couple.

B. Communications Training. Communication skills represent an important component of the decision-making process. Providing participants with a theoretical model coupled with an opportunity to practice new skills in a role play situation may enable participants to transfer this learning to experiences outside the workshop. Choose any basic communications program and tailor your examples for relevancy to optional parenthood. The Awareness Wheel Model described in Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (1975) Alive and Aware is easily adaptable for a workshop or classroom setting.

To the Teacher: Communication and decision-making skills that encourage application of knowledge and sensitivity are invaluable to students in many areas of their lives, not only in deciding whether to have children or remain

childfree. Family life education in its broadest context suggests that teachers try a variety of topics and methods in encouraging personal growth and rational decision making.

To the Counselor: Good decision-making and communications skills are essential to any interpersonal relationship. These skills are particularly needed by couples in the process of deciding whether they want children so that they establish an atmosphere of trust in which to share constructive feedback.

To the Staff Trainer: Staff need to know about theory underlying decision-making and communication models and to sharpen their own skills in these vital areas. It will help them to predict where group discussion might go and enable them to introduce "the mechanics" of how to get to the goal most effectively. Staff also need to model good skills for the group to emmulate.

Suggested Readings:

A. Hamermesh, Frances. Preparing Professionals for Family Life and Human Sexuality Education. Michigan: Department of Public Health, 1978.
See especially Chapter 5, Group Process, Decision Making and Other Approaches Worth Trying.

B. Miller, Sherod, Nunnally, Elam and Wackman, Daniel. Alive and Aware. Minneapolis: Interpersonal Communications Programs, Inc., 1975.
See especially discussion of Awareness Wheel Model as basic component of communication process.

C. Phelps, Stanlee and Austin, Nancy. The Assertive Woman. San Luis Obispo: Impact Press, 1975.
Written in a very personal, rather than technical style. Encompasses the best of many resources available on assertiveness.

EXERCISE #4
Page 1

Time: 75 minutes

Topic: The "Reproductive Instinct"

Purpose: To explore myths surrounding pregnancy and childbearing and to gain a balanced view of the rewards and limitations of parental responsibilities.

Materials: Film: "Story of Eric"

Distributor: Centre Films
1103 North El Centro Avenue
Hollywood, CA 90038

Time: 33 minutes

16mm sound projector

Screen

Blackboard and chalk

Opening Comments: People affected by pronatalism--those attitudes and policies which promote parenthood for everyone--often go to extremes in extolling the virtues of parenthood (Peck and Senderowitz, 1974). Elizabeth Whelan (1975), author of the classic book, A Baby...Maybe, cautions us that "babies are not only lovable, they are also messy, demanding, impatient, and totally exhausting." Whelan reminds us that things get worse as the children get older. She tells of a mother of two who reports:

> Things do change...I was tied to the house for the first five years. Now that I'm not chained to the house, I'm chained to the car...There's no getting around the fact that I've been promoted from bottle washer to chauffeur.
>
> Whelan (1979, p. 109)

No honest parent is going to tell you that raising children isn't often a hassle. Without your asking, some will even tell you all about the anxiety and pain of childbirth. A father of four told Whelan:

> Well, I would say the primary reason we had the kids was so we didn't frustrate my old lady's maternal instinct...You know, women have this need.
>
> Whelan (1975, p. 39)

How can you get a more balanced view of parenthood? How do you know if your interest in children is having the experience of being pregnant (or impregnating!) as juxtaposed with the experience of actually raising a child? Or perhaps it's fear of pregnancy which is affecting your decision?

Participants in workshops on fertility decisions report that it is very helpful to separately examine issues related to pregnancy, as distinguished from issues related to childrearing, and then to compare and contrast their findings. Separately examining issues of pregnancy from issues of childrearing also lends itself nicely to a discussion about adoption and step-parenting versus biological children.

In a moment we're going to view an award winning documentary film about a couple having their first child through natural childbirth. This film is a romanticized record of a young, Caucasian, middle-class couple's first childbirth experience. The parents prepare for birth by studying and practicing the Lamaze Prepared Childbirth Technique. The mother has a happy and active pregnancy. Both parents participate in the delivery.

Let's have a look at the film now and then use it as a vehicle to stimulate discussion about the rewards and limitations of pregnancy and childrearing.

Procedure:

A. Show the film (33 minutes).

EXERCISE #4
Page 3

B. Assign participants to small discussion groups of 5 - 6 people of the same sex.

C. Participants have 50 minutes to discuss the "joys and sorrows" of parenthood. Suggest they use the film just viewed to consider such topics as myths, stereotypes, and expectations of parenthood.

D. The task is for the participants in the small groups to draw up two separate lists enumerating the perceived joys and limitations of becoming a parent. They should be sure to note how each issue relates to pregnancy and childbirth versus childrearing. They may also want to make distinctions by sex. For example, being pregnant might have a different meaning for females than for males.

E. One person in each group is to be the recorder, to write down the group's main comments, and to give feedback to the larger group when the participants reassemble.

Process Notes: The facilitator's job is to float from group to group to observe and "coach" as necessary. You may want to encourage groups to consider the implications of rearing an adopted or step-child. Would the joys and limitations be the same? After the allotted time, reassemble the large group and have them sit in a semi-circle surrounding the blackboard. Ask each small group recorder to read the lists generated by his or her group. The facilitator lists the comments on the board and processes information by doing such things as tallying the number of times the same issues are raised by different groups and reflecting on similarities and differences in the group's comments as juxtaposed to current research findings. Encourage discussion. Solicit feedback about the film. THE FACILITATOR MUST PREPARE FOR

THIS EXERCISE BY REVIEWING CURRENT LITERATURE REGARDING JOYS AND SORROWS OF PARENTHOOD. (See Suggested Readings - below.)

Alternative Exercises:

I. Voices of Experience

Invite a guest or have a panel of guests speak from their personal experience of being a parent. Childfree people are often very curious about what it will be like to be elderly and childfree. Try to find speakers who represent opposing views and aim at diversity of opinion in arranging for guest speakers. You might solicit senior citizen's organizations for possible speakers. An interesting panel of speakers could consist of a childfree person over 50 who is happy with his/her decision; a childfree person over 50 who regrets not having children; a young parent who is very involved and enjoys raising his/her children; and a parent, either young or old, who is not experiencing all the joys he/she hoped for in raising children. Each panelist should have 15 minutes to speak and then the workshop participants should react and ask questions.

(Time: 90-105 minutes)

II. Other Media Resources

A. In place of "Story of Eric," utilize any available film or slide set dealing with pregnancy and childbirth. A resource dealing with both the physical and emotional aspects of pregnancy is essential. A resource emphasizing risks and rewards of postponing pregnancy until after age 30 is particularly useful. A film for this focus is:

"Pregnancy After 35"

Time: 22 minutes

Distributor: Polymorph Films
331 Newbury St.
Boston, MA 02115

In this film, real life situations of a number of women are shown, data relating to birth defects in relation to mother's age are given, and a woman is shown having amniocentesis (a method of testing for Down's Syndrome early in pregnancy).

B. The Rock Project, 1111 Kearny, San Francisco, CA 94133

This organization publishes "Pregnant Pause," a free quarterly publication primarily aimed at professionals in the radio and record industries. Also produces Trigger Tapes, "spot messages" of popular music stars sharing their feelings about responsible parenthood. Excellent for high school students.

To the Teacher: Helping your students gain a balanced view of the rewards and limitations of pregnancy and parenting can easily be worked into any standard family life curriculum. It doesn't require a special film or guest speaker. It does require the willingness of the teacher to be a catalyst in helping students become aware of their own feelings, so that the choices they make are conscious and deliberate, based on their own value system and factual information.

To the Counselor: It is important for the counselor to create an atmosphere of trust that will stimulate clients to examine their personal value system. Ask your clients to share the myths and fears they may have about pregnancy. The goal is to make them aware of their beliefs and feelings about childbirth

so that they can evaluate these beliefs and feelings and act upon them in a realistic manner.

To the Staff Trainer: Family life professionals vary in their feelings about what it's like to be pregnant. Although many maintain an outwardly clinical and objective tone, attitudes, religious beliefs and life experiences may influence how a professional interacts with a client on this topic. Use this exercise to encourage your staff to share their feelings in an atmosphere of trust and unconditional acceptance of all responses.

Suggested Readings:

A. Fabe, Marilyn and Wikler, Norma. Up Against the Clock. New York: Random House, 1979.

Highly informative examination of psychological, sociological and biological aspects of motherhood viewed from the perspective of the older (30+) career woman. Contains many personal accounts of women who were interviewed for the study. Much of the book is presented in a question and answer format.

B. Whelan, Elizabeth. A Baby?...Maybe. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1975.

Classic book describing one woman's personal account of the decision making process. Used in many childfree workshops as a basic reading assignment (Family Tree, 1978; Thoen, 1978; Simon-Gruen, 1979). Addresses itself to issues concerning both men and women.

EXERCISE #5
Page 1

Time: 1 hour

Topic: The Decision Making Process

Purpose: To aid people, by means of a self-administered questionnaire, in exploring their decision about whether to have a child or remain childfree.

Materials: Thoen Commitment Scale for each participant.*

Distributor: Gail A. Thoen, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota
106 Nicholson Hall
216 Pillsbury Drive S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Time: 10 minutes to administer, 6 - 8 to score.

Opening Comments: Wouldn't it be nice if there were some sort of test you could take that would tell you whether you should become a parent? You may wish for it. It might be nice. But don't for a minute think there is such a test. No test can tell you what you ought to do in this situation!

However, a number of self-administered questionnaires have been developed in recent years which can be used as an aid in helping people think through their decision. Perhaps you have seen one in a popular family magazine or you have heard of the book, The Parent Test (Peck and Granzig, 1977). In my opinion, these questionnaires are most useful when people have a chance to discuss the results with a professional who can help them interpret the findings when weighed against other things that are going on in a person's life.

Another good way to use this type of questionnaire is in a group setting such as the workshop we are in today. This enables people to discuss their responses and receive feedback from others in the group. Certainly these self-help tools could be used without the input of a professional or a support group, but I just think it's a richer experience when shared.

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*See Alternative Exercises at the end of this exercise for other questionnaires which could be substituted.

The questionnaire we're going to use today is the Thoen Commitment Scale.* I've chosen it because:

1. It's based on research that appears to be fairly reliable and valid.
2. It's easy to administer and score.
3. It has been used successfully in both workshops and private counseling settings.

Before you take the questionnaire, I want to point out that the 13 items tap some of the most elementary issues in the decision-making process. It cannot predict what your decision should be--no instrument can do that--but it may help you gain insights into your motivations, values, pressures, and alternatives. It also allows for those of you who have a partner to make predictions about how he/she would respond to the same items. This yields a score which facilitates an examination of differences and similarities between partners on key issues.

Procedure:

A. Administer questionnaire. It is important that participants do not discuss their answers while they are taking the questionnaire.

B. The facilitator reads the scoring system aloud while participants score their own test.

C. The facilitator writes individual scores on the blackboard. Emphasize that you are not concerned with any one person's score; you just want to get an idea of the range of scores in the room. Have each person call

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*Thoen Commitment Scale and scoring system, along with a brief history of the development of the questionnaire is available from the author. See order form in Section VIII.

out their score as you write it on the blackboard. Tally how many have the same score.

D. Make observations about the data and encourage discussion by asking participants for their interpretation of the scores. For example, note the highest and the lowest scores and ask:

"Where do you suppose a person with this score is in the decision-making process?"

"Which item did you find the most difficult to answer?"

"Was it easier to answer for yourself or for your partner?"

Tailor discussion questions according to the make-up of your group. Utilize the information you have about participants' interests and concerns from the Background Information Sheet (Figure 2) which they were asked to fill out with their registration materials.

Process Notes: It is not unusual for some married couples in the group to become very concerned about spousal score differences. It would not be unusual for the scale to bring out in the open, perhaps for the first time, that certain spouses radically disagree on one particular but terribly important item.

An example: In a recent workshop, one young husband was furious when his wife's score revealed what she had never found the courage to tell him--that she wanted to have a child. The husband, red with rage, told his wife in front of the group that he would rather divorce her than have a child. The wife was hurt, angry, and embarrassed as the group witnessed this interaction.

What a dilemma! The workshop setting may not be the place to deal

with such troubled couples on an intimate basis. The facilitator must use all his/her skills to sensitively help the couple and the group reach some sort of closure and comfort level before proceeding. Whether or not the facilitator is a professional therapist, he/she must refrain from counseling the couple. The facilitator must communicate to the group that (1) the workshop is primarily a support group--not a therapy group--and (2) those who wish to explore the sensitive issues being dealt with on a more personal level are encouraged to seek private counseling. The facilitator should indicate that he/she is available to help with referrals to appropriate professionals in the community. The facilitator should come prepared with a list of referrals, as this is a situation that commonly arises in the workshop. The facilitator, who is also a professional therapist, may wish to make arrangements to see the participant in private practice.

In addition to supporting the embarrassed and/or angered couple, the facilitator has a responsibility to not leave the rest of the group "hanging" with their feelings about the interaction they have just witnessed -- or it may inhibit the group process. What sort of facilitator could accomplish this task? (See Section I for desirable characteristics and training of the workshop facilitator.)

Alternative Exercises:

I. Questionnaires that can be substituted for the Thoen Commitment Scale.

A. Optional Parenthood Questionnaire (OPQ).

Authors: Lee Roy Beach, Brenda D. Townes, and Frederick Campbell.

Copyright, 1978.

Cost: $1.25 each (bulk rates available)

$3.00 Clinician's manual for administering, scoring and interpreting results.

$2.50 each mail-in computer based scoring system print-out.

Distributor: National Alliance for Optional Parenthood
2010 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Time: highly variable

Based upon behavioral decision theory, the questionnaire is designed to aid thinking about multiple aspects of fertility decisions. It enables the respondent to examine cost and benefits which the authors' research indicates are associated with the decision to have a (another) child. Items probe such areas as self concept, parental responsibilities, and the effects of children on adult relationships. Excellent, highly useful tool if the facilitator plans for use well in advance of the workshop date because:

1. The questionnaire is lengthy.
2. No time limit on how long the respondent may take to complete it.
3. Interpretation of the results involves a complex scoring system designed for calculation and pictorial graphing by a professional. Highly recommended option for scoring is to use computer scoring service. Allow about two weeks for processing.

B. National Alliance for Optional Parenthood Materials.

Cost: Single copies free (bulk rates available).

(See order form in Section VIII.)

Distributor: National Alliance for Optional Parenthood

National Alliance for Optional Parenthood publishes a number of thoughtful materials from which one could easily construct a questionnaire or use to generate discussion items. Highly recommended for this purpose are:

1. "Am I Parent Material?" A list of questions relevant to the decision about whether to become a parent or remain childfree. (Also available in Spanish.) 1977.
2. "Your Parenting Decision Values." A quiz for teens to help them examine their attitudes about having a child at this time in their lives. Easily adaptable for adults. 1978.
3. "Questions and Answers." Answers to common questions about childfree living and population concerns. 1977.
4. "Children? Why Not?" A discussion of the decision whether to have children or remain childfree, including a synopsis of the research regarding how children affect marital satisfaction, a quiz on reasons for having children or remaining childfree, and a list of resources. 1979.

C. Comprehensive Parenthood Questionnaire. 1978.

Author: Tim Wernette

Cost: $1.00

Distributor: Tim Wernette
Director of Training
Planned Parenthood World Population
3100 West 8th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90005

Specifically designed for people who are in the process of deciding whether to become parents or remain childfree. Can be

used by individuals and couples. Easy to administer and interpret. Has been used in workshop settings.

D. The Parent Test.

Authors: Ellen Peck and William Granzig. 1977.

Cost: $9.95

Distributor: G.P. Putnam's Sons
390 Murry Hill Parkway
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Time: highly variable

The questionnaire is part of a full length book. It is a self-administered questionnaire based on an on-going study directed by the authors. It attempts to examine the basic resources which the authors suggest are important considerations for people who are in the decision-making process, namely, maturity, money, good healthy and a home. Mainly useful for discussion purposes. It is easily scored and may elicit a lot of discussion concerning the validity of the items vis a vis the decision-making process.

II. The Case History, another technique which can be substituted for the Thoen Commitment Scale.*

Have the workshop participants break into small groups and analyze a case history of a fictional, but realistic, childfree couple in the process of deciding whether to have a child or remain childfree. Personalize the case history you construct to fit the backgrounds and interests of your particular workshop audience. Do this by utilizing information you collected earlier from workshop participants at regis-

*Ginsberg and Greenberg (1979) are using a variation of this technique as part of an on-going research project examining the effectiveness of workshop participation on fertility decisions.

tration time. (See Background Information Form, Figure 2, Section III.) The case history should reflect issues which are commonly tapped in professionally designed fertility questionnaires. See questionnaires in Part I for ideas. An illustration of a case history constructed for this exercise is given in Data Sheet #5.

(Time: 45 - 90 minutes)

The task is for workshop participants to list pros and cons of the fictional couple becoming parents. Break participants into small groups and leave time to reassemble into large group and share findings. The facilitator should list pros and cons volunteered by each small group on the blackboard and encourage discussion by noting similarities and differences of responses.

To the Teacher: The use of a forced-choice questionnaire provides an opportunity for students to gain awareness of their values; to clarify how these values were developed or inherited; and to evaluate those values which truly fit their own value system. Choose a questionnaire especially designed for students to use in clarifying the costs and value of children rather than an instrument designed for people actually involved in the decision-making process. (See Exercise #2 for suggestions.)

To the Counselor: Pen and paper techniques are invaluable in enhancing counseling sessions. Knowledge and use of newly developed materials creates an atmosphere of learning for clients that will stimulate thinking and action. Educational techniques have a definite place in the counseling setting when they validate the uniqueness and worth of the client while contributing knowledge.

EXERCISE #5
Page 9

To the Staff Trainer: It is necessary for family life professionals to build a base of knowledge about the psychological, biological and social implications of voluntary childlessness. Having your staff take, score and discuss one or more of the newly developed decision-making instruments will provide an opportunity for the professional to build empathy and knowledge about issues involved in deciding whether to become a parent or remain childfree. In answering the questionnaire, have staff imagine they are the client and answer items accordingly.

Suggested Readings:

I. Theoretical background of questionnaire construction

A. Thoen Commitment Scale.

Thoen, Gail A. Commitment Among Voluntary Childfree Couples to a Variant Lifestyle. University of Minnesota dissertation, 1977.

B. Optional Parenthood Questionnaire.

Beach, Lee Roy, Townes, Brenda, Campbell, Frederick, and Keating, George. "Developing and Testing a Decision Aid for Birth Planning Decisions." Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 1976, 15, 99-116.

C. The Parent Test.

Peck, Ellen and Granzig, William. The Parent Test. New York City: Putnam's Sons, 1977.

II. Personal Perspectives on the Decision Making Process

A. Fabe, Marilyn and Wikler, Norma. Up Against the Clock. New York: Random House, 1979.

Highly informative examination of psychological, sociological and

biological aspects of motherhood viewed from the perspective of the older (30+) career woman. Contains many personal accounts of women who were interviewed for the study. Much of the book is presented in a question and answer format.

B. Whelan, Elizabeth. A Baby?...Maybe. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1975.

Classic book describing one woman's personal account of the decision making process. Used in many childfree workshops as basic reading assignment (Family Tree, 1978; Thoen, 1978; Simon-Gruen, 1979). Addresses itself to issues concerning both men and women.

EXERCISE #6
Page 1

Time: 45 minutes

Topic: Question and Answer Session

Purpose: To enable participants to ask questions about the childfree lifestyle and to build group cohesion by encouraging sharing of information, strategies and concerns.

Materials: Facilitator should have available copies of any assigned readings which were distributed during registration period. (See Registration Procedures.) You may want to refer to them when answering questions.

Opening Comments: What do we know about the biological, psychological, and sociological consequences of delayed or permanent childlessness? What information is available from research findings, clinical settings and personal experience to help you in the decision-making process?

In this session we are going to pool our resources, raise questions, explore answers, and share our concerns about implications of the childfree lifestyle.

Each of us has a wealth of information and experiences we can share with others here today. I will be glad to try and answer any questions you direct at me. I can't promise to have the answer, but maybe as a group we can brainstorm some possible answers and suggest ways in which you might go about seeking the information you want.

Let's get some questions or comments out on the floor. Anyone who would like to respond is welcome to do so.

Procedure: Encourage group discussion on a wide variety of issues by calling upon as many different people as possible. You may wish to set some time limits before you begin on how long you are going to spend on each question.

A WORD OF CAUTION: The facilitator must not set him/herself up as

the "expert" and expect or attempt to answer questions with definitive diagnostic, or prescriptive remarks. Keep in mind that the purpose of this exercise is to generate discussion and enable participants to share information and concerns. You are here as a resource person -- not as their doctor or social worker.

Process Notes: Listed below are (1) some sample questions often raised by participants in this type of session; (2) suggested concepts and key terms which the facilitator can use to prepare for this session; and (3) suggested readings and resources where the facilitator and participants can seek further information. Specific answers to questions are not given to emphasize that the facilitator should prepare responses which he/she feels comfortable in sharing.

I. Biological Issues

A. Typical Questions

1. "How late can I wait to have a baby?"
2. "What sterilization procedures are available for men and women?"
3. "How great are the medical risks of delayed childbearing past 30?"
4. "Are there increased chances of birth defects in childbearing over 30?"
5. "How long can I stay on the Pill?"

B. Key Concepts and Terminology

1. Declining fertility occurs in males and females from age 30+.
2. Sterilization
   a. mini-laparoscopy (female procedure usually performed on an out-patient basis)
   b. salpingectomy (traditional female procedure requiring in-patient care; commonly called "tubal ligation")
   c. vasectomy (male procedure usually performed on out-patient basis)
   d. sperm bank (professional storing of semen for future use in artificial insemination)
3. Scientific advances
   a. amniocentesis (medical procedure to detect many serious

genetic abnormalities, including mongolism; can be performed after the 13th week of pregnancy; amniotic fluid is withdrawn from pregnant woman's abdomen with a needle and analyzed for chromosome patterns)

b. genetic counseling (qualified professionals who are trained to speak about hereditary disorders; utilizes medical tests and counseling procedures to help people deal with potential genetic risk)

4. Abortion procedures (many professionals require women to have some personal counseling before they will proceed with abortion)
5. Genetic defects (Down's syndrome or mongolism is associated with aging parents; common cause of mental retardation)
6. Possible long-term effects of contraceptives (speak to your own doctor who is familiar with your case history; if you can't frankly discuss your concerns, find a doctor who understands your concerns)

II. Psychological Issues

A. Typical Questions

1. "Is parenthood an indicator of maturity and good mental health?"
2. "Will I be sorry when I'm old that I didn't have children?"
3. "Everyone tells me that when I have my own children, I'll love them. Do you think that's true?"

B. Key Concepts and Terminology

1. Developmental schemes
   a. Erickson's "Eight Stages of Man" (classical scheme of human development emphasizing how people adapt to triumphs and disappointments in the life cycle)
   b. Kohlberg's "Moral Development" (highly acclaimed scheme of moral development emphasizing indices of adult integrity and maturity)
2. Costs and values of children (theory that the individual will choose the alternative which offers him or her the maximum possible perceived benefits)
3. Maternal (paternal) instinct (debate whether drive toward parenthood is intrinsic or learned behavior)
4. "Empty nest" syndrome (debate whether or not feelings of loneliness, despair, and loss of purpose occur to parents when children are launched)
5. Rites of passage (anthropological concept suggesting certain events mark the passage of individuals from one stage of life into the next, for example, parenthood signals maturity)

III. Sociological and Miscellaneous Issues

A. Typical Questions

1. "How can I deal with social pressures to have children?"
2. "Is adoption a realistic alternative?"
3. "What do we know about the effects of working mothers on children?"

B. Key Concepts and Terminology

1. Pronatalism (attitudes and policies that promote parenthood for everyone)
2. Adoption (the likelihood of adopting a healthy infant has greatly declined)
3. Quality versus quantity of child care (concept that it is quality of experiences that you have with your child versus the actual amount of time spent with the child which heavily influences child development)

Alternative Exercises:

A. Professional Speakers. Invite a panel of guest speakers to talk about the biological, psychological and sociological implications of the child-free lifestyle and/or implications of parenthood. Ask speakers to leave time for question and answer session. Possible panel: clergy, doctors, therapists and cost-of-living experts.

B. Lay Speakers. Invite a panel of community members to talk about their first-hand experiences with the childfree lifestyle or with parenthood. Ask speakers to leave time for question and answer session. Possible panel: a person who is permanently childfree either because of age or sterilization procedure, a person who is undecided about remaining child-free, a person who became a parent after age 30, a parent or grandparent of a childfree person, a person who thoroughly enjoys parenthood.

Suggested Readings:

A. Campbell, Angus. "The American Way of Mating: Marriage Si, Children Only Maybe." Psychology Today. May, 1975, 37-43.

Non-technical presentation of partial results of a larger study published

on the quality of American life. Discusses how childfree couples feel subjectively about being childfree throughout the life cycle. Findings suggest that couples without children have a higher level of marital satisfaction than those with children.

B. Erickson, Erick. Childhood and Society. New York: Norton & Co., 1963.
Classic book often used in college classrooms. Technical but stimulating discussion of human development and its relation to society. See especially, Chapter 7, "Eight Stages of Man" for Erickson's definition of maturity.

C. Hawke, Sharryl and Know, David. One Child By Choice. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977.
Focus of this book is on advantages and disadvantages of raising an only child. It has implications for the older parent because it examines the idea that parents can enjoy the rewards of parenthood by limiting their family size to one rather than by producing a multi-child family over an extended period of years.

D. Price, Jane. You're Not Too Old to Have a Baby. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Girou, 1977.
Highly informative discussion of biological and psychological implications of childbearing by the older parent. Author combines reviews of recent medical findings, in-depth interviews, and personal insights to give realistic but enccuraging picture of late parenthood. Helpful to both men and women. See especially Chapter 3, "The Reproductive Time Clock. When Does It Run Out?"

E. Wood, Roberta, Campbell, Frederick, Townes, Brenda, and Beach, Lee Roy.

"Birth Planning Decisions." American Journal of Public Health, 1977, 67; 6, 563-656.

Two case histories serve to illustrate the use of costs and values in fertility decision-making process.

Additional Resources:

A. American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
924 W. 9th St.
Upland, CA 91786

This organization maintains a roster of cooperating therapists throughout the U.S. Couples who disagree about whether to have children or remain childfree may wish to seek personal counseling.

B. Association for Voluntary Sterilization, Inc.
708 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

This organization maintains a roster of over 2000 cooperating physicians throughout the United States and publishes a wide variety of highly informative materials.

C. Planned Parenthood
810 Seventh Ave.
New York, NY 10019

In addition to helping clients with contraceptive and abortion services, many local branches have a speaker's bureau covering a wide variety of topics. Also publishes a wide variety of highly informative materials.

D. Genetic Counseling Services. Check the University or medical school in your area.

E. Social Service Agencies and Helping Professionals. Check the yellow pages of your phone directory. Encourage group members to share "word-of-mouth" referrals -- often a reliable source of services for the child-free.

EXERCISE #7
Page 1

Time: 15 minutes

Topic: Concluding the Workshop Experience: Evaluation

Purpose: To emphasize the importance of evaluation in applied settings, and to offer a suggestion on how to do so for the workshop format described above.

Materials: An evaluation form for each participant (see Data Sheet #4).

Opening Comments: While a large body of literature exists supporting the general positive effects of small group experiences for a variety of topics (e.g., assertiveness training, divorce adjustment), the author is not aware of any studies which specifically describe the evaluation of childfree workshops. Case studies which utilize rigorous research designs and systematic evaluation of childfree workshops are badly needed in order to assess the effectiveness of this approach for the childfree.* In addition, studies comparing the childfree in workshop settings with childfree people in traditional counseling settings are needed to assess the relative strength of each approach. With the need for such information comes the concurrent need for refined measurement procedures and tools designed for such an examination.

In brief, even minimally acceptable forms of evaluation are missing from the childfree literature. It is not possible at this time to assess whether this is due to the failure of reserachers and clinicians to publish their work or whether, in fact, little or no work of an educational or therapeutic nature with the voluntarily childfree has been undertaken.

I'd like us to take a few minutes now to fill out an evaluation form about this workshop. I sincerely welcome your feedback. I have purposely

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*The author is currently involved in an on-going study evaluating the effectiveness of workshops she has facilitated.

left many of the questions open-ended to invite your comments. The questionnaire is totally anonymous to encourage you to share your feelings.

Process Notes: Despite the absence of literature on evaluation procedures for the childfree workshops, the facilitator should not neglect evaluation. Even if the sponsor of the workshop is not concerned with documenting or publishing the findings, such information is invaluable for not only assessing the workshop and the facilitator, but also the planning of future workshops.

The instrument need not be elaborate or scientifically tested to be useful. Data Sheet #4 illustrates an evaluation form I used at a recent workshop. It could easily be modified to fit a variety of workshop activities. Of course, as with all evaluation instruments, truthfulness of responses by participants may be influenced by the degree of anonymity which can be assured. Accordingly, the facilitator should leave the room while the evaluation form is administered. One of the workshop participants is asked to collect the completed forms. Copies of the results are promised to interested participants.

EXERCISE #8
Page 1

Time: Variable

Topic: Feedback

Purpose: To give the author feedback on this manual.

Materials: Questionnaire for the manual user (see below).

Opening Comments: This manual is more than some words on a written page to me. It is a process. It symbolizes years of working with people in the area of fertility decision-making and, more recently, interaction with family life professionals who are interested in doing some of this same work.

I invite you to be part of this process. As a user of this manual, your comments and feelings about this book are very important to me. Your answers to the following questionnaire will provide me with feedback about your personal experiences in using this manual and help me to make my work more useful to others.

Please take a minute to complete the questionnaire and send it to me, anonymously if you wish. If you prefer, write me a letter about your reactions and what you would like me to pass on to others when this manual is revised.

MANUAL EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Manual Content

A. Below is a list of major exercises appearing in the manual.

1. Mark an "X" beside the exercises that were most useful or meaningful to you.
2. Mark a check "✓" beside the exercises that you found least important.
3. Mark an "E" if all the exercises were equally important.

List of Exercises

____ Getting Acquainted
____ Values Clarification
____ Assertiveness Training
____ The Reproductive Instinct
____ The Decision Making Process
____ Question and Answer Session
____ Evaluation
____ Feedback

B. Below is a list of techniques which the author used to organize the manual.

1. Mark an "X" beside the techniques that were most useful or meaningful to you.
2. Mark a check "✓" beside the techniques that you found least important.
3. Mark an "E" if all the techniques were equally important.

Organizational Techniques

____ Individual exercise units
____ Suggestions for alternative exercises
____ Suggestions for further reading and resources
____ Annotated bibliography
____ Introductory directions on how to use the manual
____ General procedures for organizing a workshop
____ Concluding remarks: strengthening family life education
____ Data Sheets

II. Manual Format

A. I found the directions in each exercise easy to understand and implement.

Agree		Neutral		Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

EXERCISE #8
Page 3

B. I found the separate comments written especially To the Counselor, To the Staff Trainer and To the Teacher a good technique for imparting specific information for specialized interests.

Agree		Neutral		Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

C. In general, the tone of the language and the level of sophistication of the wording of directions was appropriate.

Agree		Neutral		Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

D. I would recommend this manual to other family life professionals.

Agree		Neutral		Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

III. Open-ended Questions

A. What additional topics and information would you like to see included in a revision of this book?

B. Where did you learn about the availability of this manual?

C. How do you feel about the National Alliance for Optional Parenthood sponsoring the writing and distribution of this manual?

D. Has the manual encouraged you to incorporate or refine services about optional parenthood into your work setting?

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Explain your response:

E. What services, if any, had you provided before reading this manual for people deciding whether to have children or remain childfree?

F. Do you feel the manual is useful for the intended audience; that is, counselors, teachers, and staff trainers? Who else could use it?

IV. Information About Yourself to Help the Author Know Her Audience

A. Current position and job duties

Check as many as apply:

B. I am primarily a counselor in

1. private practice ____
2. public agency ____ (such as Planned Parenthood)
3. private agency ____
4. school setting ____

EXERCISE #8
Page 5

C. I am primarily a teacher in

1. a university ____
2. a college ____
3. a high school ____
4. a junior high school ____
5. an elementary school ____
6. adult community education programs ____

D. I am primarily an administrator or a program director in

1. an educational setting (specify grade level) ____
2. a public agency ____
3. a private agency ____

E. Other (be specific) ____

F. Sex: female ____ male ____

G. Age: ____

H. Last year of formal education completed:

1. high school graduate ____
2. 1-3 years of college ____
3. college graduate ____
4. masters degree ____
5. doctorate degree ____
6. vocational training ____
7. other (specify) ____

I. Number of children, if any: ____

J. Marital status: ____

EXERCISE #8
Page 6

K. I would be interested in attending a national workshop of professionals working on fertility decisions.

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

L. Other comments:

Optional: Name _____

Address _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

SECTION V

DATA FACT SHEETS

Data Sheet #1

GET ACQUAINTED TASK

WELCOME!

A TASK FOR YOU BEFORE THE WORKSHOP BEGINS

Goal: To get acquainted with other workshop participants in an informal manner.

Task: At the beginning of the workshop you will be asked to introduce one other participant to the group. This should be a person you did not know before today. Two or three sentences about where the person comes from, what they hope to gain from today's workshop, and how they heard about the workshop, will help us get to know each other.

Procedure: Pair off with one other person whom you did not know before today. "Interview" each other and be prepared to make a brief introduction when we begin.

Data Sheet #2

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Childfree Lifestyle: A Workshop Exploring the Decision

9:00 - 9:30 am	Introductions: Welcoming remarks. Introduce facilitator and participants. Distribute handout of workshop agenda.
9:30 - 10:45 am	Value Clarification: Advantages and disadvantages of remaining childfree. Show film, "You Can't Mean Not Ever?" Process technique: Small co-ed groups.
10:45 - 10:55 am	Break
10:55 - 11:15 am	General Discussion: Reassemble large group and solicit small group lists. Facilitator lists findings on blackboard while processing generalizations and making observations of data.
11:15 - 12:15 pm	Assertiveness Training for Childfree People: Introduce theory using examples pertinent to the childfree lifestyle (e.g., dealing with pressures, the decision-making process, and requesting services from professionals). After theory is introduced, use role play technique in large group.
12:15 - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 - 2:15 pm	Exploring the Myths of Parenthood: Show film, "Story of Eric." Process technique: All male and all female small groups react to film.
2:15 - 3:00 pm	General Discussion: Reassemble large group and solicit small group lists. Facilitator lists findings on blackboard while processing generalizations and making observations of data.
3:00 - 4:00 pm	Decision-Making Process: Thoen Commitment Scale. Introduce, administer, score, and discuss.
4:00 - 4:45 pm	Open Question and Answer Period: Participants have opportunity to share feelings about topics of personal interest. Facilitator uses information gleaned from background sheets to guide session without revealing confidences that have been shared.
4:45 - 5:00 pm	Evaluation: Administer brief and anonymous questionnaire.

Data Sheet #3
Page 1

OVERVIEW OF NON-ASSERTIVE, ASSERTIVE, AGGRESSIVE, AND PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

	Non-Assertive (Passive)	Assertive	Aggressive	Passive-Aggressive (Indirect)
Behavior	Allowing others to dictate your thoughts, feelings and activities. Denying your own feelings to please others.	Standing up for your own thoughts, feelings and declaring what activities you choose to engage in. Valuing yourself without devaluing others.	Standing up for your thoughts, feelings and activities without concern for others. Aggressiveness can be verbal or physical.	Appear to let others dictate your thoughts, feelings and activities. You often say one thing but mean another.
How Do You Handle the Problem	You ignore the problem.	You deal with the problem in a direct manner.	You deal with the problem in an obtrusive manner.	You deal with the problem in an indirect, coy and manipulative manner.
Your Rights	You deny the importance of your rights and feelings.	You acknowledge the importance of your rights and feelings without discounting others. You act accordingly.	You insensitively declare your rights and feelings and act without concern for others.	You appear to discount the importance of your rights and feelings while acting indirectly to get what you want.
Valuing Self and Others	You put yourself down.	You treat others with the respect you want for yourself.	You put yourself above others.	You appear to treat others as superior while indirectly putting them down.

	Non-Assertive (Passive)	Assertive	Aggressive	Passive-Aggressive (Indirect)
Getting What You Want	You hope people will give you what you need out of pity or guilt.	You set a precedent for mutual respect in all transactions.	You get your way by bullying or instilling fears in others.	You go after what you want in a coy, flirty or manipulative manner.
Expressing Self	You don't communicate what you feel or want.	You clearly communicate what you feel or want.	You demand others listen to what you feel or want without concern for their needs.	You appear not to know what you feel or want.
Decision Making	You allow others to decide for you.	You make your own decisions.	You make decisions for yourself and others.	You choose for yourself and others but often they are not aware of it.
Your Feelings	You feel bitter, cheated and used.	You feel good about yourself and others.	You feel superior to others.	You feel superior to others but you act as if you feel inferior.

	Non-Assertive (Passive)	Assertive	Aggressive	Passive-Aggressive (Indirect)
Self-Esteem	You have low self-esteem and doubt your abilities.	You have high self-esteem and a realistic view of your abilities.	You have low self-esteem but act as if you have a strong ego.	You lack confidence about your ability to get what you want in a straight-forward manner.

Discussion Questions:

Describe non-assertive, assertive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive characteristics in your own words.

Do you recognize yourself in these patterns? When are you non-assertive, assertive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive?

Do you recognize people you are close to in these patterns?

How do you feel when you are non-assertive, assertive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive?

How would you tell someone in an assertive way about your decision to have children or to remain childfree?

Data Sheet #4
Page 1

CHILDFREE LIFESTYLE WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Gail A. Thoen, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota

1. Which segment of the workshop was the most meaningful to you and why? (e.g., assertiveness training, the film, taking the commitment scale, etc.)

2. Which segment of the workshop was the least meaningful to you and why? (e.g., assertiveness training, the film, taking the commitment scale, etc.)

3. I sincerely welcome feedback about my part in facilitating the workshop. Please comment on any aspect of my presentation that comes to mind. For example:

   -Did I treat the issue of whether to have children or remain childfree objectively? (fairly)

   -Were men and women treated equally?

   -Any other comments?

4. What do you think about the length of the workshop? Would you have preferred more or fewer meetings? Were the handouts useful?

5. Do you feel that (Name of Sponsor) is an appropriate sponsor of a workshop on the childfree lifestyle? Did its sponsorship influence your decision to register?

6. How did you feel about having representatives of the organization as coparticipants in the workshop? Did it facilitate or inhibit your spontaneity?

Data Sheet #4
Page 2

7. In what way, if any, has the workshop affected your decision whether to have children or remain childfree?

8. What effect has this workshop had on your level of comfort regarding your decision to remain childfree? I feel:

   more comfortable ____ less comfortable ____ about the same ____

   Comment:

9. You may recall in your readings for the workshop that some researchers have reported similar characteristics regarding childfree people. As a way of learning whether or not workshop participants share these characteristics, would you please indicate:

   Religion: Whether or not I actively practice my religion (e.g., attend church or temple),

   I was raised a (an) _____
   (write in religion, agnostic or atheist)

   I now consider myself a (an) _____
   (write in religion, agnostic or atheist)

   Birth Order: I am the first, the middle, the last, or the only child (circle one) in a family of _____ children. (Comment if clarification is necessary, e.g., death of a child in the family.)

10. How would you sum up your feelings about attending the workshop?

    -Was it a worthwhile experience?

    -Would you recommend it to others?

Thank you for your feedback. It was a joy to work with you this weekend. Best of luck in whatever lifestyle you pursue!

Data Sheet #5
Page 1

CASE HISTORIES OF TYPICAL COUPLES
WHO HAVE ATTENDED A CHILDFREE WORKSHOP

Couple A. Background Information:

Age: He, 27; she, 25. Married 5 years. He is a high school graduate, manages a gas station and his goal is to someday own his own station. She is a junior in college. Both were raised in traditional Catholic, working-class homes with large families, where the mother's role was that of a housewife. Both are now non-religious. At the time of their marriage both assumed they would start a family in about 2 or 3 years and that she would take the birth control pill until then.

What this couple has discussed prior to taking the Thoen Commitment Scale:

He told her that he definitely wants children, but is willing to let her finish college, after which he expects her to be a full-time wife and mother. She recently told him that she has changed her mind and has decided never to have children. They have had violent arguments over this. While she reaffirms her commitment to their marriage, she says she wants a full-time career, maybe graduate school someday, and would like for one of them to be sterilized as soon as possible. She would like his understanding and support in these major life decisions.

What the couple has never openly discussed prior to taking the scale:

The depth of her feelings about never wanting a child frightens her. She would rather separate than have a child, yet she believes she is committed to her marriage. The husband is also frightened by this turn of events. He feels he no longer understands his wife and that she is discounting his feelings. He can't imagine married life without children. He hopes this is just a "phase" she is passing through. He doesn't support the idea of sterilization for either of them.

Couple B. Background Information:

Age: He, 31; she, 29. Married 8 years. He is a college-educated small businessman. He built his business from "the bottom up", and considers it his pride and joy. She has been working as a nurse for the past six years but lately has become very dissatisfied with her job.

Both were reared in urban, traditional, Protestant homes where the mother's role was that of a housewife. Although neither are active in church, they both consider themselves Protestant. She remembers very vividly as a child, her mother saying that women who had small children

should stay at home and care for them -- not run off and get a job.

At the time of their marriage both assumed they would start a family in about 2 or 3 years, and that she would take the birth control pill until then.

What this couple has discussed prior to taking the Thoen Commitment Scale:

After 3 or 4 years of marriage, both agreed that remaining permanently childfree was a serious possibility for them. Neither had an overwhelming desire to have children and both loved their freedom, so as to persue their joint and individual interests without the responsibility of parenthood. In the past year, however, she has thought a lot about whether she will "be sorry" if she doesn't have a child. While she has not made a decision, she would like her husband to be more supportive about reopening the issue. They have had serious arguments over this, as he feels the matter is decided. He thinks their marriage is perfect the way it is, and that her new interest in parenthood would disappear if she went back to school and found a career she was really interested in.

What the couple has never openly discussed prior to taking the scale:

The depth of his feeling against becoming a parent surprises him. He believes his wife is entitled to explore ways of making her life meaningful, but he feels that parenthood would be a "disaster" for them. Although he has never told her, he doesn't think either of them have the right temperament and patience to be good parents. Moreover, he has no intention of changing his lifestyle to participate in childrearing or housekeeping. He likes things just the way they are. She is furious with him for not being more supportive in her desire to explore the issue of whether or not to have a child, but has not yet expressed the full depth of her anger. She is more upset about their communication problems than the issue of parenthood at this point in their relationship. She wonders just what her husband is thinking.

SECTION VI

SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONALIZING THE WORKSHOP FORMAT

In the foregoing section, we developed a step-by-step program for presenting a one-day workshop to explore the parenthood option. Suggestions for workshop exercises were given and carefully tailored so that they would fit into the allotted time slot of a one-day format. In this section, we will describe how counselors, teachers and agency staff can easily design a workshop format that can be personalized to meet individual needs and objectives.

The two most commonly used timing variations of the one-day format are: (1) expansion into a series of mini-workshop sessions scheduled for once a week for a period of three to eight weeks for about two hours each, and (2) reduction into one mini-workshop session approximately 2 to 3 hours in duration.

Below are two models illustrating these variations on the one-day format. Before we look at these models, I want to give you some guidelines for developing exercises for your own workshop model, and present a guided fantasy experience as an example of how to implement these guidelines.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DESIGNING AN EXTENDED WORKSHOP FORMAT

1. Define the objectives of the workshop for participants and for staff.
2. Decide which issues you want to explore in each session of the workshop and how many sessions you will need to meet your objectives.
3. Choose a wide variety of exercises and techniques to help meet your objectives.

For example, I am often asked, "Dr. Thoen, what do you think it will be like to be old and childfree? Will I be sorry that I didn't have children?" Thus, if I were going to expand the basic one-day format, I would certainly include an exercise to explore this major concern. Following the guidelines presented above I would plan the session in the following manner.

1. The objective of the workshop session is to help participants gain an affective and cognitive understanding of the meaning of childlessness in later years of the life cycle.
2. The issue for participants to deal with on an emotional and intellectual level is the separation of myths, fears and lack of information about aging from the realities of aging with and without children.
3. A tool I have not used in any other part of the workshop and is ideally suited for an emotional and intellectual exploration of this topic is the Guided Fantasy Technique.*

GUIDED FANTASY TECHNIQUE**

This approach to personal growth has been widely used by helping professionals in counseling, education, and workshop settings. It lends itself nicely to a wide variety of topics applicable to the childfree such as: growing old without children, career versus family goals and achievement needs. Pioneering work by Skovholt and Hoenninger (1974) and Morgan and Skovholt (1977) in the area of career counseling laid the foundation for following guided fantasy which I developed for use with the childfree:

Self-Directed Guided Career Fantasy: Award Banquet

This is a time for you to imagine some things relating to your present life and to your future. I want you to imagine some scenes, but before we do

---

*In developing this manual, the author learned through correspondence that other family life professionals working with the childfree are also utilizing the guided fantasy technique (e.g., Family Tree, 1979; Simon-Gruen, 1979).

**Adapted from a tape recording made by Thomas Skovholt for use in career counseling. Reprinted with permission. The author wishes to express her gratitude to Dr. Skovholt, University of Minnesota, for teaching her this strategy and suggestions on its adaptability for working with people who are in the process of deciding whether to have children or remain childfree.

that, let's do some relaxation training. It may help to do some relaxation training at this time. First thing I'd like you to do is to take a deep breath, hold it, let it out very slowly, another deep breath, hold it, let it out very slowly, very slowly, another ... (pause). Just let the tension run out your legs, out of your body. Just let it all go. Just let yourself relax as much as possible ... (pause). I'd like you to imagine something now: Imagine you're in a real comfortable place. Someplace where you can really relax. Maybe that's a room for you someplace, on a beach, maybe it's skiing, wherever it is ... just relax ... (pause).

O.K. now let's change the image. I want you to imagine receiving an award at a banquet. Imagine that it is five years from now. I want you to imagine that you are sitting at a big award dinner. You have remained child-free in order to pursue your career goals. You're sitting there with a number of other people at the table. During the meal you think about the award, what you've done to get it, whether it was worth it, whether you are thrilled by it all. The meal is over. It is time for the award. Your name is being called to receive an honor. You may be thrilled by all the attention, or you may be embarrassed by it. In any case, your name is being called for a special honor. As you slowly get up from your chair and go towards the front table, you think about your honor. You are being honored for something really special. You go to that front table. On the way there you think about the award. What are you being praised for? As you're going towards the front, as you're moving in almost slow motion, you ask how badly did you want it. Did you want it very bad, moderately or just a little bit? Enough to have remained childfree? So you receive congratulations, you receive the public acknowledgement, and you proceed back to your table. On the way back you think about it. You think as you're moving in slow motion whether it

was worth it, to give up children, to grow older without having a family. Was it worth it to forego children so that you could accomplish this achievement?

Now I want us to imagine another fantasy. This one is in a similar room to the last one. The awards banquet is over and you are getting up to leave but as you leave instead of going home you go to another room. You are getting up, moving to the other room. As you move to the other room, some of the people around you may be changed because instead of five years from now, it's five years ago. As you move from one room to another, you are getting ten years younger. And the people who came with you to the awards dinner are different. But you're sitting around another table like the old table in the other room, and you're ten years younger. The same process occurs again. Your name is called, you stand up, you move forward. What is the award for? How thrilled are you by all of it? How excited? You're moving forward, thinking about it all. You think about your age, think about what it is. Why don't you have children now? You receive the honor. Think about returning to your table as all the attention is being showered on you. Think about whether it was worth it, whether it was important to you. And you sit down again, and it's time now for somebody else. Gradually this rememberance, this daydream, this fantasy fades for you.

It's time now to open your eyes and think about the two banquets.

Process Notes: Encourage discussion by making the following comments:

I want you first of all to think about some of the things that I'm going to mention. Think about them one at a time.

First, in the future, five years from now award dinner fantasy, what happened to you? What was your special skill or competence? How clear was the feeling that this was the thing, that it was worth remaining childfree

in order to achieve this goal? People vary on this, but how was it for you? Second, how clear was the five year ago fantasy for you? What was the special skill, competence or personal quality that you had that was celebrated here? Why weren't you ready to have children at this age?

Third question, how do the two compare? If they're different, how do you explain the differences? How do you explain the changes? How do you explain the similarities? How does this relate to your overall life goals? Who were the important people that knew about your achievements in the two situations? How important was public acknowledgement?

Finally, some people believe that humans are motivated to be competent at something! Do you think you're more competent in your career than you would be at being a parent? What are the strengths and limitations you'd bring to parenthood?

Now that we have illustrated some guidelines on how to expand the basic workshop format and developed an example of a guided fantasy, let's turn our attention to workshop models I and II, examples of an expanded and reduced format, respectively.

MODEL I: EXPANSION OF THE WORKSHOP FORMAT INTO A SERIES OF MINI-WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Depending on such issues as the potential population you wish to serve, the size of your staff, and the time commitment you are willing to make, you may wish to sponsor a workshop that meets over an extended period of time with a limited enrollment of 10 to 30 people. Two primary advantages of the extended format are: (1) it greatly facilitates group cohesion, and (2) it encourages personal growth between sessions which can be shared at subsequent meetings.

The following model was developed by Dr. John C. Freund, Director of Consultation and Education at the Aroostook Mental Health Center in Fort Fairfield, Maine. It is included here as an example of an 8-session workshop format. Dr. Freund's workshop is open to persons considering a first (second) child, adoption, marrying into a family with children, or the child-free option (1979, p. 1).

Considering Parenthood: A Model Developed by John C. Freund, Ed.D.*

Session I. Introduction of leader(s) and group members and defining what participants expect from the workshop experience. Set guidelines for group behavior and participation.

Session II. Explore reasons for and against having children. Participants are asked to fill out the Optional Parenthood Questionnaire at home and bring it back the following session. (See Exercise #5 for description of this tool.)

Session III. Discuss issues raised by Optional Parenthood Questionnaire and in suggested reading, A Baby...Maybe? (See Exercise #5 for annotation of this book.)

Session IV. Continue discussion of issues raised in Session III.

Session V. Explore participants' life experiences and understanding of their family origin.

Session VI. Explore participants' current family situation.

Session VII. Explore participants' expectations and hopes for their family of the future.

Session VIII. Sum up issues, concerns, and questions. Evaluation.

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MODEL II: REDUCTION OF THE WORKSHOP FORMAT INTO A ONE EVENING PROGRAM

A one evening session of about 2 1/2 to 3 hours duration is an excellent vehicle for introducing the topic of optional parenthood to a community. Often participants will use this informal non-therapeutic setting as an entry mechanism into the social service care system and may be motivated to seek further services in deciding whether to have children or remain childfree. This initial meeting can be used to informally survey the audience about their interest in attending an extended workshop series and/or other services you might offer.

Suggested One-Session Program

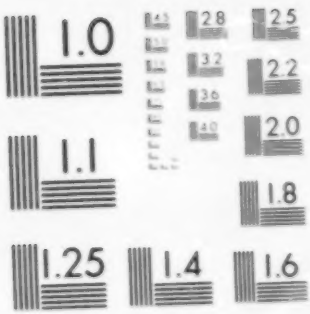
A one session program requires a structured format for maximum impact during limited time. A format the author has used successfully is outlined below. It is adapted from Exercise #8 described earlier in this manual.

1. Introduction: brief commentary to establish credibility and rapport with the audience.
2. Main Event: show film, "You Can't Mean Not Ever?"
3. Ask participants to form all male and all female small groups of 6 to 7 people and react to the film.
4. Reassemble large groups and process comments. (See Exercise #8 for complete processing suggestions.)

Suggested Readings:

A. Skovholt, T.M. and R.W. Hoenninger. "Guided Fantasy in Career Counseling." Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1974, 52, 693-696.

B. Morgan, J. I. and T.M. Skovholt. "Using Inner Experience: Fantasy and Daydreams in Career Counseling." Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1977, 24, 391-397.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

SECTION VII

CONCLUDING REMARKS: HOW YOU CAN STRENGTHEN FAMILY LIFE BY SUPPORTING THE PARENTHOOD OPTION*

*An earlier version of these closing remarks appeared in Thoen, Gail A. and Martha G. Russell, "The Childfree Option: A Workshop Model for Making One of Life's Major Decisions." In N. Stinnett, B. Chesser and J. DeFrain (Eds.), Building Family Strengths: Blueprints for Action. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Many family life professionals attest to the fertility of growth-oriented programs such as workshops both for producing personal insights and developing coping skills regarding issues brought forth during the educational process. This manual described a workshop approach which maximizes the generation of such awareness and skills in a manner that has potential implications for strengthening family life as well as the childfree lifestyle. For instance, the workshop model has implications for strengthening family life by supporting the notion of choice in determining one's lifestyle. That is, workshop participants are encouraged to explore the idea that parenthood is a voluntary decision rather than an inevitable process. The implication is that the family bond is strengthened when couples voluntarily choose a lifestyle, be it with or without children. My guess is that people are more content with decisions that they feel they have control over and where there has been an element of personal choice involved in the decision-making process.

Another way in which the workshop model has implications for strengthening family life is its emphasis on educational and therapeutic resources for making and living with major life decisions. That is, assuming that workshop participants find the experience beneficial in exploring the parenthood option, they will have an awareness that professional social services may be useful to them again sometime in the future. The implication is that the family bond is strengthened when people are aware and willing to use all the information and professional help that is available to them when coping with the complexities of contemporary family life.

A third way in which the workshop has implications for strengthening family life is in informing family life professionals about procedures and skills--such as the commitment scale and assertiveness training--that are

available for helping clients make responsible fertility decisions. The implication is that professionals such as counselors, physicians and the clergy are in a unique position to strengthen family life by encouraging people to regard parenthood as a choice and to provide or refer people to support services where they can get the information they need to make informed fertility decisions.

Suggestions for Action. What can the person who is concerned with strengthening family life by supporting the childfree option as a viable lifestyle do to put his/her concerns into action? It seems to me that several explicit changes in social policy are warranted and that individuals can work for these changes through their roles as concerned citizens and/or through their professional roles. Specifically, concerned individuals should support social policies at the local and national level which:

1. Provide social services such as counseling and educational programs for those wishing to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the childfree lifestyle.
2. Promote legislation which gives childfree citizens the same tax benefits as those granted to citizens with children.
3. Encourage basic and applied research designed to systematically explore the childfree lifestyle.

In brief, those who are in a position of influence because of their professional expertise and position should initiate and support changes in current social policy. And, those who are in a position of influence because of their role as a concerned citizen and community member should request such changes by making their needs and concerns known to professionals who can initiate such policies.

SECTION VIII

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LIST OF DECISION-MAKING PROGRAMS

The following list consists of names and agencies involved in activities regarding decision-making about parenthood and non-parenthood, e.g. classes, seminars, private counseling. This list is not comprehensive, nor does inclusion in this list indicate an endorsement of the service. This list represents an attempt to facilitate communication among people involved in decision-making activities throughout the country.

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